



Focus Group Summary



Regional Housing Project
Growth Management Planning Council

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Growth Management Planning Council

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Focus Group Summary created by
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Roosevelt High School

Young Adults

Highest Priority Concerns

- Affordability
- Diverse community
- Garden apartments
- Home ownership
- Open space
- Parks and playgrounds
- Transit
- Young and elderly adults

Summary

The majority of students plan to attend college within the next five years. Within ten years, the majority also believe they will own a single-family home in the King County or Seattle area. The groups tended to use higher density housing types in the third exercise but also requested numerous amenities, everything from health clubs to parks and playgrounds. Open space and trails were important for each of the groups and in many of the exercises they drew out a site plan to show where the open space or park space would be provided. Many listed affordability as an issue but did not seem to think that they would be unable to afford their own homes or condominiums within ten years. The young adult, elderly and non-traditional families were people types the students provided for mainly within the garden apartment housing type. Transit access was very important for the students while traffic congestion was less of a concern.



Roosevelt High School Focus Group Participants



Roosevelt High School Focus Group Participants

Focus Group Results

Bellevue Community College

Young Adults

Highest Priority Concerns

- Affordability
- Community facilities
- Community input
- Design and construction quality
- Diverse community
- Preservation of open space
- Safety and security

Summary

The young adult participants had an awareness of the affordable housing crisis in King County. Many live with family to avoid high rent costs while others struggle to make rent payments while attending school. Many of the students recognized that the issues associated with housing were inevitable. A large number of icon cards ended up in the gray zone because participants felt they depended on the particular situation if they were viewed positively or negatively. One student placed traffic congestion in the gray area and said that this is a given so it is not a “most important” issue. Another student placed the highrise housing type in the most important category because she personally would not live in this housing type yet highrises keep development in urban areas allowing for more rural and natural areas. She felt this was a “most important” issue but did not have a solution to the conflicting interpretations.

The young adult participants represented diverse backgrounds and felt that having a diverse community was very important. The participants added mother-in-law apartments as a housing type as it can add density without disturbing the character of a single-family neighborhood. Safety was a concern for young adult females, many of whom choose their housing based on safety and security.



Bellevue Community College Focus Group Storyboard Result



Bellevue Community College Focus Group Participants



Bellevue Community College Focus Group Participants



Introduction

Growth Management Planning Council Regional Housing Project

The Growth Management Planning Council of King County (GMPC) represents the 39 cities of King County, special purpose districts and King County government. In collaboration with individual jurisdictions, the GMPC develops and implements growth management policies and plans. The GMPC’s Regional Housing Project is a growth management implementation project funded by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. The Regional Housing Project seeks to identify specific housing actions and strategies, tailored to the needs of the local communities, building upon the constructive and critical input of citizens, residents, neighbors and all representatives of the housing industry.

In order to implement the Regional Housing Project, the GMPC has hired a consultant team led by Bay Area Economics (BAE) that includes Pacific Rim Resources (PRR) coordinating the public outreach efforts and Makers Architecture and Urban Design providing graphic materials. This report has been produced by PRR to summarize the public outreach effort performed to solicit public opinion and attitudes.

The Regional Housing Project has been conducted under the central assumption that housing solutions cannot be effectively implemented, nor needs addressed, without strong community support and ownership of those solutions. In order to obtain meaningful community input, fourteen citizen focus groups were conducted and numerous workshops on housing are planned for all areas of King County. The GMPC’s Regional Housing Project seeks to identify solutions that will work to implement housing goals and policies already adopted by local governments.

All of the community input received on housing issues and solutions will be closely examined and tested by multiple panels of experts and stakeholders in the housing development industry. The responses



and input of stakeholder groups will be brought back to community participants, giving them an opportunity to refine their comments.

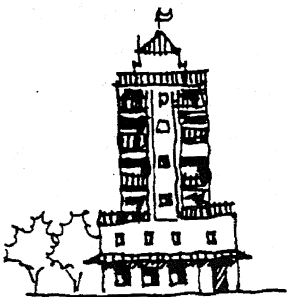
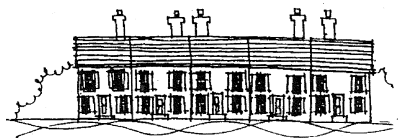
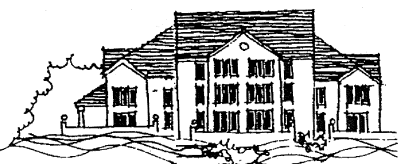


Input from community discussions and from housing stakeholders, including the solutions agreed upon, will be included in a report, “Best Practices - Housing Strategies that Work for King County”. Strategies and best practices identified in this report may be implemented by local governments as well as by developers, lenders, community groups and other participants in the housing development process. In addition, a companion video will be produced that portrays housing conditions and solutions derived from the public outreach efforts.

Through open communication between existing residents, housing experts, and public officials, the Regional Housing Project is intended to produce a consensus on housing solutions and new commitments to achieving the housing goals of local governments in King County.

Focus Groups

Rather than simply collect technical data or statistical analysis, the GMPC opted to gather the opinions and perspectives of existing residents and the broader community. The Regional Housing Project’s main objective is to facilitate the acceptance of regional housing solutions by creating greater community acceptance for housing production and affordable housing. In order to target housing policies that can garner community support, the Regional Housing Project team designed a series focus group sessions to explore community opinions and concerns regarding housing. The focus groups brought together citizens of five sub-regions within King County to discuss regional and local issues. Additionally, focus group sessions were conducted with future housing users — high school and community college students.



yet most preferred to separate the affordable units from the market rate units in the third exercise. Both groups expressed traffic congestion concerns and the need for better transit service. Many of the participants moved to the area from outlying areas because of traffic congestion. They generally prefer a suburban community but one that is convenient and has access to a variety of services.



Shoreline Focus Group Storyboard Results

Focus Group Results

North King County

Shoreline, Lake Forest Park and Kenmore

Highest Priority Concerns

- Affordability
- Community services
- Contextual fit
- Design and construction quality
- Housing for elderly
- Pedestrian friendly access
- Prefer small scale multi-family development
- Retain open space and suburban character

Summary



Shoreline Focus Group Participants

Residents in North King County expressed an overall understanding of the housing crisis. Many shared what they paid for their home and what it is worth today, often double or triple the cost that they purchased it for. Almost all homeowners shared that they could not afford to purchase the home they live in today. Many stated that their community has changed dramatically over the last 15-20 years. There was a general concern over the loss of open space. Participants had the desire to retain as much open space as possible along with the overall character of their suburban community. Pedestrian friendly features were desired along with community facilities but only if they were compatible with the context. Participants did not necessarily desire an urban pedestrian environment but a safe place to walk with access to community facilities.



Shoreline Focus Group Participants

Privacy, particularly sound and visual privacy, was very important to these participants. The highrise housing type was deemed unacceptable for their community and mid-rises were a housing type that most would not choose to live in unless they were elderly. The second North Seattle group, during the third exercise, desired additional housing for the elderly. There was a concern that the area’s population is aging and that there are not enough multi-family facilities to provide housing options for a variety of abilities, ages and income levels. The groups both desired a diverse community of cultures, ages and income levels

Methodology

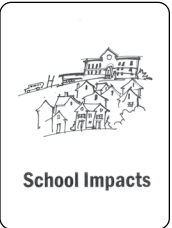
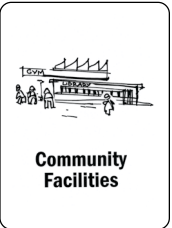
Focus Groups

As part of the Growth Management Planning Council’s (GMPC) Regional Housing Project, community input was solicited through fourteen small focus groups conducted by Pacific Rim Resources (PRR) throughout King County. Two of the 14 focus groups were specially targeted to reach young adults entering the work force from high school or college. Five sub-regions were targeted in King County for focus groups: Seattle, Eastside (Bothell south to Newcastle), Southwest King County (Des Moines and Federal Way), Southeast King County (Kent, Renton, and Tukwila), and North King County (Shoreline, Lake Forest Park and Kenmore). Each of the groups had on average ten participants that contributed their feedback on housing related issues, values, people and housing types. The goal of each session was to gather input from citizens on housing issues and strategies related to local and regional growth management goals for housing.

Pacific Rim Resources staff recruited participants for the fourteen interactive focus groups in the five diverse locales within a two-month time span.

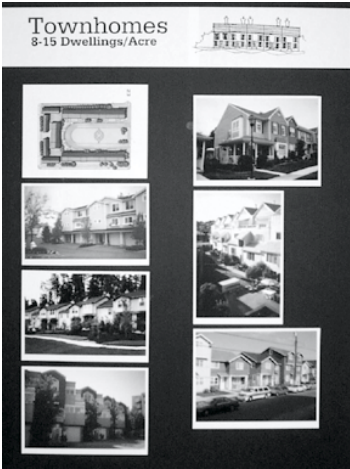
Focus group locations	dates
Seattle	May 9th, 10th and 11th
Eastside	May 16th, 17th and 18th
Southeast Seattle	May 25th and June 1st
Southwest Seattle	May 23rd and 24th
North Seattle	May 30th and 31st
Roosevelt High School, Seattle	June 12th
Bellevue Community College	June 14th

Participants were recruited from voting records that included names of citizens that have voted in three out of the last four elections. These civic-minded individuals were contacted in the evening hours and invited to participate in a two-hour housing focus group with receipt of a \$50.00 honorarium. Pacific Rim Resources staff recruited up to 12 participants for each focus group with ideally nine home-owners and three renters, a mix of age ranges between the ages of 20 and 60, half female and half male.

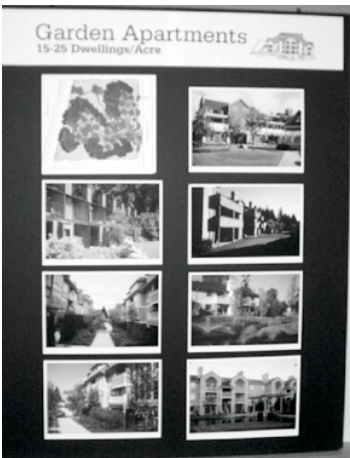




Housing Type Display Boards



Townhomes Display Board



Garden Apartment Display Board

The most significant challenge when recruiting participants was communicating to people that the telephone inquiries were not sales related. In Seattle, many of the voting record phone numbers were outdated suggesting that residents tend to move more frequently. Eastside residents were difficult to reach and it was challenging to find citizens that rented as opposed to owning their home or residence. Seattle participants in general were the easiest to recruit while the Southwest and Eastside were more difficult. Overall, citizens were pleased that they were recognized as consistent voters.

The sessions were designed in three parts that were focused on (1) engaging the participants in discussion, (2) learning about housing issues from both the facilitators and from other participants and (3) conceptualizing tough choices about housing density in their neighborhoods. Success was achieved on many levels; the participants were excited to have the opportunity to voice their opinions and actually be listened to. The information gathered will be instrumental in GMPC's understanding of the values of their constituents.

Through the interactive exercises, the participants were asked to share their feelings about housing and related issues in King County. Participants provided their perspective on providing affordable housing in their communities and how additional density can positively and negatively affect their neighborhoods. Participants were further challenged with an exercise that required them to balance their priorities and express what qualifiers they felt were most important in their community to generate additional successful multi-family housing.

Focus Group Results

Southeast King County

Kent, Renton and Tukwila

Highest Priority Concerns

- Affordability
- Community involvement
- Design and construction quality
- Government accountability
- Large lot sizes
- Prefer a mix of housing types
- Preservation of rural land
- Traffic congestion

Summary

Many of the participants from Southeast Seattle moved to the area to have larger lot sizes and a suburban/rural environment. The last decade has changed the area dramatically, adding numerous single and multi-family housing developments. The result has impacted traffic, creating undesired congestion. Community input was very important to the participants. Some participants have gotten involved and many others wish they were more involved.

Both groups had a social focus, expressing concern for the mentally ill, low-income families, elderly and retaining diversity in their communities. Affordability was the most important issue. Many expressed that the area was affordable but is quickly becoming expensive. Most moved to the area for the affordable housing, large single-family lot size, and the rural open space.

Participants from Kent expressed their concern over losing farm and pasture land. An overall distrust of government was also expressed. How tax resources are used in relation to services provided to the community is unclear and appears to be poorly managed. During the last exercise, most of the small groups desired a mix of housing types and used between three and four different housing types. Most used the highrise housing type only because it gave them the ability to build some small-lot single-family homes.



Kent Focus Group Storyboard Results



Tukwila Focus Group Participants



Kent Focus Group Participants

currently too many apartment buildings. Additional housing built should use lower density housing types like duplex/triplexes, townhouses or small lot single-family homes. Traffic congestion and transit were also areas of debate. The two issues need to be addressed with better solutions, as their transit service currently does not adequately service the area. The participants admitted that they do not want to give up their cars, recognizing that personally they have conflicting desires.



Federal Way Focus Group Storyboard Results

Focus Group Format

Part I

The focus group structure was comprised of three parts: a warm-up discussion, a symbol storyboard exercise and a simulated project review. Within the first thirty minutes, participants signed-in, helped themselves to refreshments and then settled into the meeting room to begin with a round of introductions. Marcia Wagoner presented the purpose of the GMPC Regional Housing Project and outlined the purpose of the session. After reviewing the evening’s agenda she introduced the first focus group section. In four of the fourteen focus groups, videotaping was discussed and release forms were distributed and signed. Participants were then asked to share their name, where they currently live and a housing story that they themselves have experienced or have heard about. The goal of this section was to personally engage participants in the housing discussion as well as introduce themselves to the group.

Part II

The second section was comprised of an interactive storyboard exercise that involved a series of icon or value cards representing three categories: multi-family housing types, people types, and general issues related to new housing development. A continuum banner was used along one wall surface that began with Acceptable, Depends and Unacceptable and later included Most Important, Less Important and Least Important. Participants were handed approximately three cards each, asked to place their card on the storyboard continuum and give their reasoning behind the suggested placement. After each person had the opportunity to place their cards, they then had the option to move cards and explain why they wished to do so. Participants were also allowed to add cards on issues, people, or housing types which they felt were not represented.

Depending on the icon card category, some related better to the classification of Acceptable, Depends, Unacceptable and others to Most Important, Less Important or Least Important. The middle area of the continuum banner was gray in color represented literally a “gray area” or a place that depended on the interpretation rather than a clear “black or white” situation.



Part II Storyboard Results



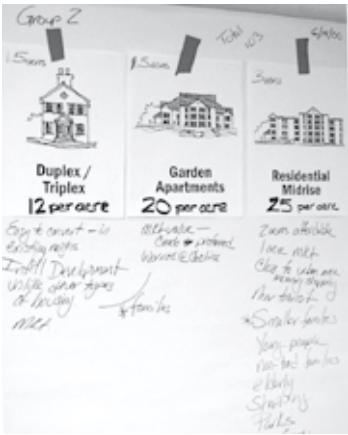
Part III Exercise Solutions

Part III

Participants were asked to simulate a citizen review process by determining how they would advise their City Council regarding adding 100 new units of housing, half affordable and half market rate to their community. Six general housing developments types were provided at various densities for the exercise.

Housing Type	Units/Acre
Small Lot Single Family	8 units per acre
Duplex/Triplex	12 units per acre
Townhomes	12 units per acre
Midrise	20 units per acre
Garden Apartments	25 units per acre
Highrise	50 units per acre

The majority of sessions broke up into three small working groups to address the problem. Participants were given worksheets to help formulate their own opinions and then they discussed their options for accommodating the additional 100 units of housing. Once the group had developed a proposed housing type mix they were also asked what qualifying issues or circumstances would be needed to make their solution successful in their region. The three groups presented their combination of housing types at the close of the exercise.



Part III Exercise Solutions

Focus Group Results

Southwest King County

Federal Way

Highest Priority Concerns

- Contextual fit
- Design and construction quality
- Government accountability
- Hidden fiscal impact costs
- Poor transit service and solutions
- Prefer smaller scale multi-family developments
- Pride in ownership/community
- Traffic congestion

Summary

Many of the participants from Federal Way were long time residents of the area. The newest resident moved to the area six years ago while five of the participants have lived in the area for over 20 years. The majority of the group was concerned about design quality and particularly quality construction and materials. Many feel that newer buildings are being poorly built. They felt that quality construction and materials are most important when building multi-family developments. There was also a concern for retaining privacy, especially noise privacy which can be achieved through the use of good, solid materials and proper siting and design. Many participants had a civic approach to providing affordable housing for all income levels and people types, feeling that diversity was a positive attribute for their community. A general concern about possible hidden fiscal impact costs was raised along with a concern that zoning changes are made without enough community input.

Overall, a livable community was a very important theme for this group. They desired housing types and home ownership that would contribute to a “homey” feeling, a place where people would have pride of ownership. Midrise and Highrise housing types were considered inappropriate for their community, especially highrise buildings over six stories. There was an understanding that additional housing may be needed within their community but most felt there were



Federal Way Focus Group Participants



Federal Way Focus Group Participants

the exercise, they were somehow giving their consent to build 100 addition units in Des Moines. The other two groups reluctantly did the exercise but stated that they agreed with the third group and they too are not willing to accept more housing units. There was an overall suspicion of the exercise, government and the intent of the focus group.



Des Moines Focus Group Storyboard Results

Focus Group Results

Participants for each of the fourteen focus groups were generally well informed regarding housing issues in King County and the lack of affordable housing. The groups represented a diverse age range and often one or two people out of each group represented a minority population. During the course of the focus group’s activities, participants shared their candid opinions about housing issues, family and housing types, discovering common concerns and areas of divergence. Through interactive group exercises, serious issues were debated positively and negatively in relationship to their communities. Many participants learned from each other’s opinions and broadened their perspective on housing issues. Trade-offs, contradictions and opposing viewpoints were recognized. Groups often reflected at the end of their session that the exercises were helpful in expanding their understanding of the issues and how they relate to one another.

As the focus groups progressed, the participants began working in groups of three to solve the third exercise. This allowed for a more in depth analysis of the trade-offs involved in building an additional 100 housing units in their community. Within these small groups, the problem solving exercise allowed each individual to engage in the exercise and discuss the qualifiers they felt were needed within their community. The overall result was more representative of the entire group’s opinions.

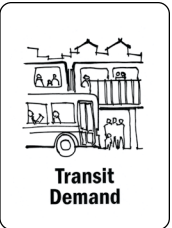
Throughout the exercises, some common themes emerged from the groups. Design and construction quality were discussed as priorities during each session. Design quality was defined broadly, including acoustical and visual privacy, quality materials and construction, color and style variety and overall contextual fit. The siting and design of a multi-family building was the deciding factor for many as to whether the building would be successful in a community. Most focus groups were concerned with the appropriate contextual fit of multi-family buildings in their communities. Having transitional areas between single-family neighborhoods and multi-family neighborhoods was considered essential. The scale of the buildings in relationship to their environment and surrounding buildings was a high priority. Many feel that buildings are currently lacking individuality, being poorly designed with cheap construction materials.



Community input in development



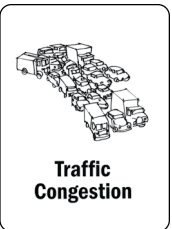
Affordability



Transit Demand



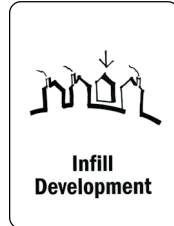
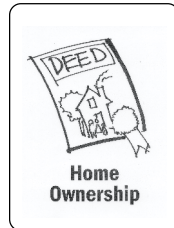
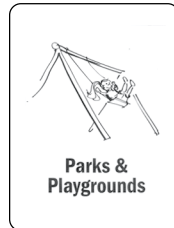
Open Space



Traffic Congestion



Design Quality



Other commonalities among focus groups included concern over traffic congestion and transit service. Many expressed their frustration with increased traffic congestion, noting that this factor impacts their housing location choices. A number of participants have moved closer to urban areas to avoid long commutes while others must endure long commutes to afford quality single-family homes. Poor transit service was a complaint expressed by all groups including those in Seattle. Many did not feel that appropriate traffic solutions are being considered. Often participants expressed their personal conflicts between the desire for individual car use and public transportation. The majority of focus groups felt that new housing development must take into consideration traffic impact, building only when the infrastructure is in place.

Affordability and home ownership were also common issues among focus groups. There was an overall understanding of the region's increasing housing costs and the inverse affect on affordable housing stock. Many shared that they could not afford the home they currently live in and are concerned that their children will not have the opportunity to own their own homes.

An overall concern for the loss of open space was expressed by all focus groups. In urban areas, the desire was to provide adequate open space, parks and playgrounds, common recreational areas and community facilities. Many felt that in order for multi-family housing to be successful, common areas for residents to informally interact were necessary.

Focus Group Results

Southwest King County

Des Moines

Highest Priority Concerns

- Government accountability
- Multi-family housing unacceptable
- No more development
- Pride in ownership
- Safety and security
- Too densely populated
- Traffic congestion
- Transit

Summary

The strongest concerns about housing were raised by the participants from the City of Des Moines. These residents stated that their community is the second most densely populated city in the state behind Seattle. The majority felt that all arterials have been developed with as much multi-family housing as the community can handle. Other concerns raised were traffic congestion, transit and affordability. Many of the participants are frustrated by the traffic congestion but do not see busing or light rail as feasible solutions to the problem. They want the freedom and convenience of their individual cars yet they are annoyed by the lack of adequate roadway capacity.

There was a broad misconception about what affordable housing means. Many feel that citizens pay for affordable units and feel this is not a responsibility they are willing to pay for. The other belief is that multi-family housing and affordable units lead to unwanted people types, drug use and slum neighborhoods. They requested that management or an on-site landlord be a requirement for multi-family developments especially if there is a mix of income levels. Many people mentioned that the community has become run down due to the multi-family housing that has been built within the last 15 years. During the third section of the focus group, one group refused to do the exercise to make the statement that they will not accept additional housing in their community. They felt if they participated in



Des Moines Focus Group Participants



Des Moines Focus Group Participants



Bellevue Focus Group Participants

Affordability is also a concern for eastside residents. A majority of the participants have been eastside residents for well over 10-15 years. Some have remained in the general vicinity of their neighborhoods, while others have moved around primarily on the eastside. Participants acknowledged their experience with the dramatic increase in property and home values in King County. The appreciation has allowed many home owners to move up in housing stock.

Loss of open space was a concern for young and old eastside residents. Many expressed sentiment over losing open space, wetlands and forested areas but at the same time desired additional road capacity to ease congestion for individual mobility. Diversity was a controversial issue for eastside residents. Many were not in favor of introducing diverse ethnicities or incomes levels and most believed that affordable housing should be kept separate from market rate housing to be successful. Participants felt that in order to achieve higher densities in urban areas, community facilities and other public amenities would need to grow in proportion to the population increases. Many felt that proximity to quality public facilities and services along with smaller unit sizes would create a positive balance and successfully create affordable housing opportunities while benefiting the community with added amenities.



Bellevue Focus Group Storyboard Results

Focus Group Results

Seattle

Highest Priority Concerns

- Affordability
- Community input
- Contextual fit
- Design and construction quality
- Diversity
- Open space/public areas
- Pedestrian friendly
- Shopping

Summary

The Seattle focus group participants were very knowledgeable about housing issues within their communities. Many have been involved in their neighborhood planning efforts yet the majority expressed a feeling that despite their involvement, community input is still not being listened to or implemented. Many participants recognized a need for affordable housing and shared that they could not afford to live in the homes they currently live in due to the rapid appreciation of their homes. There was a desire to preserve affordable single-family housing for the next generation to have the opportunity to own a home within the city at some point in their lives. Small lot single-family housing was considered an acceptable way to accomplish this.

Seattleites felt strongly about having quality design and construction, appropriately scaled for their neighborhood. Many recognized that with higher densities, community facilities and open space become much more important public amenities. Many people used European examples of public gathering places as a means of retaining a sense of community with higher densities. It was perceived that by providing space for people to interact you build stronger community relationships.

A number of cards were added in the second exercise two of which were additional housing types: Accessory Dwelling Units and Live/



Marcia Wagoner, Pacific Rim Resources, and Jonathan Stern, Bay Area Economics, facilitate a Seattle Focus Group



Seattle Focus Group Participants



Seattle Focus Group Participants

Work spaces. There was an overall desire to have a variety of unit sizes available in multi-family buildings thus encouraging a diverse community of family types and affordable units integrated with market rate units. Seattle generally perceived affordability as a positive contribution to a community and specifically as a way to retain long time residents or young adults with families. Some participants in Seattle were willing to trade home ownership for stable affordable rents.

Transit access was a priority when adding density to a community along with child care and other retail amenities that make it easier for people to rely less on automobiles. There was overall desire to retain individuality in Seattle through housing and business types. Many sited housing examples from outside the City of Seattle that look like “cookie cutter” housing. People feared that affordable housing would mean a lack of variety in style, appearance and personal contribution. Many expressed the need for on-site landlords to retain building quality and the option to trade services for a reduction in rent.



Seattle Focus Group Storyboard Results

Focus Group Results

Eastside

Bothell to Newcastle

Highest Priority Concerns

- Contextual fit
- Design and construction quality
- Open space
- Privacy
- School impacts
- Traffic congestion
- Transit

Summary

The eastside participants were collectively interested in design and construction quality. Many expressed their frustration with monotone new housing developments with no variety, choice or privacy. There is an overall concern that new housing is not being built with quality materials and will not retain their integrity over time. Many complained that new developments are not compatibly scaled with existing neighborhoods. There is a desire for appropriate transitions between higher density housing and single-family neighborhoods. Locations for multi-family housing types such as midrise and highrise buildings were often listed as appropriate only for downtown Bellevue. Many viewed the urban center of Bellevue as an opportunity to expand density where there is access to shopping, services, parks and transit service.

Home ownership is a high priority for eastside residents. Many felt that “the American dream,” the right to own you own home, was an opportunity that must be provided to the next generation. Small lot single-family housing is considered an acceptable means to provide home ownership at an affordable cost. Many participants desire home ownership as a way to invoke a sense of investment in the community. Maintaining neighborhood character and quality is a priority for almost all home owners.



Bellevue Focus Group Participants



Bellevue Focus Group Participants